

2/23/09 EmPOWER-EECBG Presentation Questions

- 1) Q: Are in-house design and in-house project management cost eligible for funding under the EmPOWER-EECBG grant? For example, if the County pays funds to their own people for design and management of their project, can the County get reimbursed?

A: Yes, these costs are allowable as long as MEA finds the costs to be reasonable.

- 2) Q: Are Davis-Bacon wage rates applicable if the city/county/municipality uses existing staff?

A: No, if you use staff currently employed by the local government receiving the sub-grant you do not need to pay them Davis-Bacon wages for this project.

- 3) Q: Does a traffic light replacement project need to fill out the SHPO form?

A: Yes, all projects must be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in order to ensure that ARRA funded projects will not have an “adverse effect” on historic properties (*Attachment C: Project Review Form*). SHPO recommends photo documentation of the area and the old lights is submitted with the project review form to help expedite their decision.

- 4) Q: What is the definition of *meaningful energy savings*?

A: MEA has to report energy savings accomplished through the EmPOWER EECBG program to the U.S. Department of Energy. Meaningful energy savings will vary between projects. By requiring meaningful energy savings, MEA is informing program participants that some potential projects may not be approved if they do not have sufficient energy savings (or energy generation) associated with them, based on the anticipated financial investment.

- 5) Q: Are costs going to be reimbursed for outside engineers?

A: MEA has hired a technical assistance contractor to provide technical project support. If additional support is needed, design costs are allowed as long as MEA finds these costs to be reasonable, based on the specific project.

- 6) Q: Is there a MBE/WBE requirement?

A: While MEA has not included any State MBE/WBE requirements, the EmPOWER EECBG program is funded by federal funds. On March 2, 2010, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) provided guidance and clarification to MEA that all local government recipients of EmPOWER EECBG grants must follow procurement procedures contained in 10 CFR 600.236(e), which provides that when engaged in contract procurement, all local government grant recipients will take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that minority firms, women’s business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible. Pursuant to 10 CFR 600.236(e)(2), “affirmative steps” shall include:

(i) Placing qualified small and minority businesses and women's business enterprises on solicitation lists;

(ii) Assuring that small and minority businesses, and women's

business enterprises are solicited whenever they are potential sources;

(iii) Dividing total requirements, when economically feasible, into smaller tasks or quantities to permit maximum participation by small and minority business, and women's business enterprises;

(iv) Establishing delivery schedules, where the requirement permits, which encourage participation by small and minority business, and women's business enterprises;

(v) Using the services and assistance of the Small Business Administration, and the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce; and

(vi) Requiring the prime contractor, if subcontracts are to be let, to take the affirmative steps listed in paragraphs (e)(2) (i) through (v) of this section.

7) Q: Can we add this grant money to another project provided if it meets the grant requirements?

A: Yes. If you chose to use ARRA funding in conjunction with another funding source, the ARRA guidelines need to be followed for the entire project. ARRA funds must be tracked separately from other funds.

8) Q: We are not sure of our project yet... should we fill out the grant?

A: Yes! We need 3 copies of the grant signed and returned as soon as possible. We also need your DUNS number. The technical assistance contractor can help you identify a project later on in this process.

9) Q: When does the required reporting begin?

A: Reporting does not begin until after the MEA has approved and signed off on your individual project.

10) Q: What is the time for approval after the grant agreement has been signed?

A: There is no general amount of time due to all the factors involved which will vary from project to project.

11) Q: Can we submit our forms before speaking with the technical contractor? We have identified our project and we want to get started on it.

A: Yes, if you have identified your project and you feel it can meet all of the grant's requirements, you can submit your Attachment C: Project Review Form to MEA. This will allow MEA to work with the State Historical Preservation Office to begin reviewing your project.

12) Q: When are progress reports due?

A: After the individual project has begun. The reports are due on the 5th of the month.

13) Q: Can an upgrade be a replacement? For example, can we replace our old cooling tower?

A: Yes. The upgrade needs to conserve energy and comply with all of the ARRA requirements.

14) Q: If we pay our contractors by reimbursement, do we need an independent inspector?

A: MEA does not have an independent inspector who reviews all invoices. If a problem is encountered in the future, MEA's auditor can request to review your records, as necessary.

15) Q: What is the turnaround for reimbursement?

A: Assuming everything is submitted properly, reimbursement normally takes approximately 30 days.